

“Government or No Government,”

OR,

The Question of State Allegiance.

A TRACT FOR CHURCHMEN.

MOBILE :

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NOTE---To the Reader.

The following documents are collected and issued in their present form, at the urgent instance of a friend, to whom the letter to the Church Journal was read in manuscript, and who immediately asked to be allowed to publish an edition of it at his own expense. It was afterwards thought expedient to include the articles relating to Bishop Potter's special prayer, with the Rev. Mr. Nicholson's letter upon the same subject.

It is not known, as these pages go to the press, whether the letter to the Church Journal will appear in that paper or not. The present publication is hastened from a desire to distribute it to a few members of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and others, resident in the United States, before mail communication is suspended between that Confederacy and this, as it is presumed that it will be in the course of a few days.

It may be proper to add that neither of the writers of the articles contained in this publication assumes to speak for any other than himself. The authorship of the Letter to the Church Journal, and of the articles from the Mobile Tribune, is sufficiently indicated by the initials appended to the former, and by the address of Bishop Potter's letter. The Rev. Mr. Nicholson's name is subscribed in full to his own article. Neither of these writers (although agreeing in principle, and sometimes coinciding in expression,) is at all responsible for the matter or manner of the other.

It only remains to be said that this hastily prepared pamphlet is now put forth with a sincere desire that it may tend in some measure—however small—to the promotion of truth and justice, the correction of error, and the renewal of charity.

Mobile, Ala., 23d May, 1861.

BISHOP POTTER'S CIRCULAR.

[From the Philadelphia Bulletin, of April 19th, 1861.]

The Right Rev. Bishop Potter, to-day caused the following circular to be distributed among the clergy of his diocese:

The Prayer appointed to be used in Time of War and Tumults; or the Special Prayer already put forth; or the following Prayer, or any two of them, may be used in the Churches of this Diocese, before the General Thanksgiving, at the discretion of the Minister.

ALONZO POTTER, Bishop of the Diocese of Pennsylvania.

PRAYER.

O Almighty God, who art a strong tower of defence to those who put their trust in Thee, whose power no creature is able to resist; we make our humble cry to Thee in this hour of our country's need. Thy property is always to have mercy. Deal not with us according to our sins, neither reward according to our iniquities; but stretch forth the right hand of Thy Majesty, and be our defence for Thy name's sake. Have pity upon our brethren who are in arms against the constituted authorities of the land, and show them the error of their way. Shed upon the counsels of our Rulers the spirit of wisdom, and moderation, and firmness, and unite the hearts of our people as the heart of one man in upholding the supremacy of Law, and the cause of justice and peace. Abate the violence of passion; banish pride and prejudice from every heart, and incline us all to trust in Thy righteous Providence, and to be ready for every duty. And oh, that in Thy great mercy, Thou wouldst hasten the return of unity and concord to our borders, and so order all things that peace and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety, may be established among us for all generations. These things, and whatever else Thou shalt see to be necessary and convenient for us, we humbly beg through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. *Amen.*

[Extract from an Editorial Article of the Church Journal, of April 17th, 1861.]

* * When the nation has sunk to this degree—when it forgets that the civil powers are of God, and claims that they are only of the *People*—and when the People, after thus arrogating the irresponsible exercise of a power in which they ignore God, have come to hate and despise one another; when corruption clogs every artery and vein of the national life; when professed ministers of Christ proclaim in substance as the highest quintessence of the new Gospel of the day, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth WAR, ILL-will towards men;” and when, at the bitterest and most savage outbursts of this fierce hatred, and on the Lord's day, and in what they call the Lord's House, these matchless Christians rise *en masse*, and shout with irrepressible enthusiasm until the building rings again; when the nation and the nation's “popular” religion have come to such a pass as *this*, what wonder is it that the heavy Hand of God should send us the sharp and bitter medicine of civil war? What wonder that armies should be marshalling for the deadly contest with brethren at the North, and East, and West, and South? What wonder that the National Capital should become a living arsenal of rifles and bayonets? What wonder that all commerce and manufactures are stagnant and destroyed, except the fearful industry and indomitable dispatch in making and forwarding all the means of human slaughter? What wonder that in all those innumerable cases where there are the ties of parents, or children, or kindred, or friends, in both parts of the country, perhaps standing armed against one another in hostile ranks, hearts should be wrung with an anguish too deep for utterance, and that almost paralyzes the soul from all power of recourse to that last and best refuge of poor helpless mortals—*prayer*? What wonder that some, in the desperate struggle between duty to the Government under whose flag they are sworn to serve, and love for the State which gave them birth, and where are father, mother, friends, and all that makes life dear—have lost even reason itself, and in the blight of insanity have found a relief from the greater horrors of the “madness of the people?”

But inevitable as the curse of civil war may now be,—unhappily necessary as it may be to the maintenance of any government that it should resist armed force by armed force,—

unanimous as may be the greater part of the Union in sustaining to the utmost the regularly elected and inaugurated President of the United States, let Christian men never forget the providential design of such awful calamities. . . .

[From the Church Journal of April 24th, 1861.]

The War Services Last Sunday.

The felicity with which the regularly appointed Church services for the day harmonize with remarkable events as they happen, has often been remarked; and by devout minds is always recognized as Providential in its nature. It is, as it were, the voice of God Himself, speaking to us in a manner with which the purposes of men could have no possible connection. Never was the almost supernatural force of this wonderful coincidence more striking than last Sunday. It was the first Lord's day since the President's Proclamation calling forth 75,000 men from the various States, and already during the week the whole country from end to end had sprung up with armed men. Regiment after regiment had passed through our streets, amidst whirlwinds of fierce enthusiasm; blood had already been shed in the streets of Baltimore; every congregation in this city had parted with one or more of its members in the regiments that had left or were about sailing in the afternoon for the National Capital; every mind had been on the rack with the fearful rapidity of successive telegrams, telling of disaster after disaster during the week, and even on the morning of the Lord's Day itself; every fibre of every heart was ready to start at the slightest note or sound that bore the remotest reference to war. With congregations in such a frame of mind and heart, the services in the House of God began. What breast was there that did not thrill at the opening of the First Lesson for the day (Joel iii, 9):

Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near, let them come up:

Beat your ploughshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong.

Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves round about; thither cause Thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord.

Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for the wickedness is great.

Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision; for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.

The Lord shall also roar out of Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem: and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of His people, and the strength of the children of Israel.

Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land.

But Judah shall dwell forever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation.

For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the Lord dwelleth in Zion.

It would have been hard to select a more extraordinary battle-call from the whole of the Old Testament. So striking was it that in many cases Churchmen, immediately on hearing the first words, opened their Prayer Books at the Table of Lessons, to see whether the minister had not been making a selection specially for the occasion, instead of reading the portion set down in the book: though some, whose habit it is to read over the Lessons devoutly at home before going to church, knew it beforehand, and spoke of it to their friends and relatives with astonishment and deep feeling, as if God's own hand were in it.

But it would be a very imperfect view of the meaning of the day to consider only the First Lesson. The Second Lesson, (Acts v.,) after the history of Ananias and Sapphira and their sudden death, narrates the miraculous deliverance of the Apostles from prison, and their defence before the council. Then follows Gamaliel's speech, with the brief but significant narrative of the attempt of Theudas and Judas against the government in their day:

Before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain: and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered and brought to nought.

After this man rose up Judas of Galilee, in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.

It is needless to explain the suggestions which were brought by these words to the minds of the hearers, prepared as they were, by the war summons from the prophet Joel, to trace resemblances between the calm historic past, and the hot, impetuous, and passionate present.

The next passage of Holy Writ peculiar to the day was the Epistle (1 Peter ii. 13,) where the basis of all civil authority is stated, including the duty of submission to that authority as "supreme" in all things temporal; the divine obligation resting upon that civil authority to punish evil-doers; and the true use of freedom, which is, that it shall not run into license. The last verse sums up the whole in four brief sentences, none of which numbers more than

three words: yet each of which contains one of the elements, without which, in combination, the world cannot be kept in true order:

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the King, as supreme; Or unto Governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well.

As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the King.

[A portion of this article is here omitted on account of its length. It treats of the Gospel for the Day and the Evening Lessons, as setting forth the return of peace.]

How singularly are all these six portions of Holy Scripture woven and braided together, intermingling their distinct and strongly contrasting dyes, graduated perfectly in harmonious sequence from first to last, and including in their wide and far-reaching strands all the principles and practice, the ends and the means, that present themselves to a Christian mind in view of the present fearful struggle! God grant that these portions of His blessed Word may prove a prophetic augury of a happy result; and while Law is maintained, and Order restored, may the storm of war, needful now for this result, though it be fierce, be also brief! And may this heavy judgment of God upon the land, and upon all parts of it—for all must feel it more or less—bring the hearts of all men to that “kindness” and “humbleness of mind,” that “meekness” and “long-suffering,” that they shall show themselves “forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any,” even as Christ hath forgiven us. And “above all these things,” let us “put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.”

Letter to the Editors of the Church Journal.

MESSRS EDITORS: You have many readers in the Southern States, who, as Christian brethren, feel themselves deeply aggrieved by the tone of several recent editorial articles in the Church Journal, as well as by various pastorals, public addresses, sermons, and other manifestoes, issued by bishops and clergymen of some of the dioceses of the United States. Among these, may be particularly mentioned a special prayer set forth by the Bishop of Pennsylvania, circulars or pastorals of the Bishops of Ohio and Minnesota, a prayer (as reported by the secular papers) recently offered by the Rev. Dr. Vinton, of New York, at a public meeting, &c., &c.*

As a small contribution towards justice to the other side, will you republish the enclosed article from a Mobile paper in reference to Bishop Potter's prayer? Whatever sense of the wrong done to brethren of the same household of faith may, and must have burned in the writer's bosom, it is couched in temperate and respectful terms. If wrong, it can do no harm: if right, Christian truth and candor require that we should be heard.

Now permit me, Messrs. Editors, to say a word or two with regard to some of your own recent editorials upon this subject, especially with regard to those of the 17th and 24th of April. With many of the principles advanced in these I heartily concur, particularly with what is said of the miserable political corruption that has prevailed in most of the United States, growing worse and worse with the multiplication of popular elections. [It might, by the way, have been instructive, had you stated the fact that, of all the States of the late Union, none has been so exempt from this curse as *South Carolina*, the leader of the secession movement.] I agree with you in condemning and deploring the infidel deification of “*the People*,” and the general forgetfulness of the truth that all power is of God. For one, I believe that government, whether republican or monarchical, exists *jure divino*, and that *allegiance* is a religious obligation.

*These instances might now be much extended, especially since the Address of Bishop Eastburn, and the action of the Massachusetts Convention.

But permit me to say, Messrs. Editors, that you have grossly and fatally misconceived the question at issue between the North and the South, when you consider us, in the language of Bishop Potter, as "in arms against the constituted authorities of the land;" or when, according to your own comparison, you liken our contest to "the attempt of Theudas and Judas against the government in their day." In so characterizing it, you have deeply (God forbid that I should think or say, wilfully,) wronged and misrepresented brethren who are no less faithful, conscientious, and high-toned, in their sense of loyalty to government and country, than any bishop, priest or layman of the Church in the Northern States.

The great question at issue—the only question—the question which has now swallowed up all others—is that of STATE AUTHORITY against FEDERAL AUTHORITY. The only question for the conscience of churchmen in the Southern States, from the very beginning, has been that of State allegiance or Federal allegiance. There is *now* no question on this point, for the only federal government among us is that of the Confederate States, which we all recognize.

You cannot but be aware that, from the very foundation of the Government of the United States, there have been two parties: one maintaining the independence and sovereignty of the States, the other denying it; one believing the Union to be a confederacy, the other regarding it as a consolidated democracy. We, of the South, have always held the former doctrine. I do not desire to argue the question. I wish simply to call your attention to the *fact* that it has always been the cardinal principle of our political creed. We are as true and as loyal in our allegiance as you are, but we know no other allegiance than that due to the sovereign State, and such as *the State authorizes us* to yield to any central or federal authority.

In the history of the world, there is nothing more extraordinary than the entire obliviousness of the principle of State authority, which seems of late to have overspread the whole Northern mind, like a thick cloud. You, Messrs. Editors, in common with the whole religious and secular press, the political and pulpit orators, bishops and governors, of the North, speak of "the Government," as if there were no other government than the Federal authority at Washington. In one of your editorials you allude to the struggles of some "between duty to the Government under whose flag they are sworn to serve, and love for the State which gave them birth;"—as if there were no *duty* owing to any other than the Federal Government, and as if *love* alone were the tie that should bind us to the State. With us, on the contrary, the only struggle was between the *duty* which we owe, by divine and human law, to the State, and the traditional *love* which we had been taught to entertain for the Union.

I shall not attempt to set forth the grounds upon which the Southern States thought it necessary to separate themselves from the Union, into which they had entered as free and independent members. Suffice it to say that there was nothing sacramental in the nature of that Union. There was no common umpire to which disputes respecting its terms could be referred. They believed those terms to have been violated by the election of a President pledged to principles of direct hostility to their institutions and to their equality as members of the confederacy. It is, moreover, a simple historical fact, that this election was made in opposition to the will, both of a majority of the *States* composing the confederacy, and of a majority of the *whole people* considered as one. The outward forms of the compact may have been observed, but its spirit was violated. Acting on their original, never-surrendered sovereignty, they withdrew from the association. There has been no "rebellion," no "insurrection," no resistance to "constituted authorities." In every State (with possibly one ex-

ception) the separation was effected in strict accordance with constitutions and laws. There was no violence or hostility. The separation was emphatically a movement of *peace*. It was made in the same spirit in which Abram said to Lot: "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren." It was in the same spirit in which the apostles Paul and Barnabas "departed asunder," because "the contention was so sharp between them." Not a drop of blood was shed. In the few instances of what has been stigmatized as "illegal violence," "seizure of public property," &c., the object intended, and accomplished, was to *avoid* violence and bloodshed. We have asked and offered a fair settlement of all undivided interests in public property, and an equal apportionment of the public debt. We have earnestly implored peace, and have impaired or forfeited many of our advantages by long forbearance under provocations to war.

And how have these overtures been met? Our respectful entreaties for a peaceful settlement have been contemptuously rejected. Our "regularly and legitimately constituted authorities" (to whom the Prayer Book teaches us that a "respectful obedience" is due) have been denounced as "rebels" and "traitors." Forts erected by our own consent, upon our own soil, for our own defence against invasion, have been garrisoned by hostile troops, and are now bristling with hostile guns, to force us into unwilling submission to a Union which professes to be founded upon the free consent of its constituent members! Arsenal, navy yards, ships, and other property, within our confines, in which we had at least an equal interest, have been plundered, burned and destroyed. Armed legions are gathered for the avowed purpose of invading and subjugating us; and the incentives publicly held forth to fire the fury of these troops, are, the spoils of our houses, the partition of our lands, and the "beauty" of our women!

It is hard to trust one's own senses, Messrs. Editors, when they inform us that any right reverend fathers in God, any priests, deacons, or laymen of the Church, can give countenance, directly or indirectly, to this unholy enterprise, under the plea of "*sustaining the Government*." We, of the South, have neither asked or expected that you churchmen of the North, should be other than loyal to your own governments and your own authorities, State or Federal. We have not expected you to take up arms in our cause, noble and sacred as it is. We know that it would be your duty to defend your homes, if they were invaded. But that any of you can, in any way, direct or indirect, give, or seem to give encouragement to this atrocious, this worse than Vandalic warfare against an unoffending people, who ask only peace and justice; that you can sharpen the steel intended for the breasts of Christian brethren armed only for the defence of their homes, their families, and their religion;—this is a painful mystery, which we cannot comprehend.

Bear with me yet a little longer, Messrs. Editors, in some further notice of your remarks upon the "War Services" of the 3d Sunday after Easter. Did it not occur to you that those services were used in *our* churches, as well as in *yours*? Was not that "extraordinary battle-call" of the prophet, on the first Sunday after President Lincoln's proclamation calling forth his legions to subjugate us, far more appropriate to *our* case than to *yours*? When we listened to the words, "Beat your ploughshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, I am strong,"—could our hearts fail to respond, and to take courage against the boast of *superior strength and numbers* on the part of our invaders? Think you that our Christian assemblies could fail, under the threats of war and devastation, to lay to heart such words as these:

"The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the

heavens and the earth shall shake; but the Lord will be the hope of His people, and the strength of the children of Israel."

From the Second Lesson you have very ingeniously extracted a comparison likening us to Theudas and Judas, who rose in rebellion against "the government" of "their day;" but have you forgotten that this very comparison was originally applied by Gamaliel to the *Christians*, who were accused of conspiracy and rebellion against the Caesar of "their day?" Would it not have been wiser, and more in the spirit of Christian charity and peace, to go a little further and commend to your government the judicious counsel which the same Gamaliel gave to the "chief rulers" of his "day"? "Refrain from these men, and *let them alone*." This is all that we have asked—to be let alone.

I might go on, in the same way, through the Epistle and Gospel for the day, and show that the sword which you have attempted to forge of them is, to say the least, two-edged, and that perhaps its sharper edge is that which is turned northward. Let me further call your attention to the First Lesson for Sunday last—the Sunday after Ascension,—in which the prophet, after depicting the alarm, the terror, the gloom, occasioned by a ruthless invasion, proceeds to command the authorities of his people to ordain a fast—as the Congress of the Confederate States has done within the present week—and adds:

"Then will the Lord be jealous for his land and pity his people."

"Yea, the Lord will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and you shall be satisfied therewith; and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen:

"But I will *remove far off from you the Northern army*, and will drive him unto a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the western sea. * * * * *

"Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice; for the Lord will do great things."

Now, Messrs. Editors, I shrink from the responsibility—the possible irreverence—of applying such passages of Scripture to the events of the day, clouded as they are by the mists of human passions, interests and prejudices. My only object is to show you the results of carrying out your own principles of interpretation in applying the lessons of the Church calendar to current events. If they favor *your* side of the question, they are evidently a great deal more favorable to *ours*. But I prefer to tread more reverently on holy ground, and simply to pray that God may defend the right, protect the innocent, and that it may please Him to "forgive our enemies, persecutors and slanderers, and to turn their hearts."

W. T. W.

Mobile, Ala., 17th May, 1861.

[From the Mobile Daily Tribune, of April 28th, 1861.]

Our Cause.

Bishop Alonzo Potter, of Pennsylvania, has set forth a special prayer for use in the churches of his diocese, in the course of which occurs the following petition:

"Have pity upon our brethren who are in arms against the constituted authorities of the land, and show them the error of their way."

Now, we are well aware that truth is truth, and right is right, independently of any opinions, or of any stand-point from which a question may be viewed, North or South, East or West. If we are "in arms against the constituted authorities of the land," without sufficient cause, Bishop Potter is right to say so, and to pray for our conversion from this error.

It seems to us, nevertheless, that he has assumed a tremendous responsibility in pronouncing men to be in error and "in arms against the constituted authorities of the land," when the truth is that they are in arms in obedience to the constituted authorities of *their own land*, and for its protection from a wicked and wanton invasion.

It may be very proper for Bishop Potter, as a Pennsylvanian, to pray for the success and prosperity of the authorities of *his own land*, without stopping to question whether they are right or wrong. *That* we can understand; but we do *not* understand how, in the solemn act of prayer to the God of the whole earth, he can assume to denounce the people of another government as in error for rendering obedience to *their* "constituted authorities" and for taking up arms to protect their homes from desecration.

Bishop Potter, we presume, has been educated in the belief that the "powers that be" consist of the authorities of the United States. The fundamental fact that the United States formed originally a confederate government, and that the first allegiance of the citizen is due to his own State—the source and foundation of all powers conferred upon the central authority—has been so lamentably and incomprehensibly lost sight of throughout the North, that this is scarcely to be wondered at. But when he knows, as he must know, or ought to know, that thousands of people of his own communion, equally conscientious in their sense of duty, regard their allegiance as due to the State government, and to none other, *EXCEPT SO FAR AS THE STATE ALLOWS IT*, we cannot understand how he can assume virtually to denounce them as rebels, without assuming an infallibility of judgment in political questions, which his Church does not authorize him to claim in religious ones.

Leaving entirely out of view the Confederate Government, we should like to put a question to Bishop Potter. The State of Alabama calls upon her citizens to take up arms for the defence of her own soil and that of her sister States from invasion. Would he advise a conscientious citizen of Alabama to resist this call of the "constituted authorities" of his State?

Bishop Potter may answer that he regards the authority of the government at Washington as paramount. Very well. We admit that he may conscientiously think so. Let him act according to his convictions. But *we* think differently, and cannot subject our actions to be governed by his conscientious opinions, when ours are equally conscientious the other way. *He* may believe us in error, but what right has he to declare us in error in a solemn petition to the Throne of Grace?

Bishop Potter's circular was published on Friday, the 19th inst. Two days afterwards—that is on Sunday last—we happen to know that a sermon was preached by a clergyman of this city, of the same religious faith, who took a very different view of the duty of the Christian citizen in this crisis. In the sermon that we allude to, there was an eloquent and withering rebuke of the wickedness of those who seek or wish for war as something desirable, as well as of the indulgence of feelings of anger, hatred, or revenge, against either private or public enemies. But at the same time the duty of taking up arms, at the call of the proper authorities, for the safety of our homes, for the defence of our altars, for the preservation of our civilization from being converted into barbarism, for the protection of our children and of that helpless race which is equally dependent upon us—this duty was clearly and eloquently enforced, and it was shown that the soldier thus armed in the panoply of conscientious principle and conviction of duty would be most likely to prove himself the true hero on the battle-field.

If we understand Bishop Potter aright, it is this feeling that animates our Christian soldiers, which he declares to be "error" and rebellion against the "constituted authorities." In so doing he gives moral aid and comfort—unwittingly, no doubt, but not the less truly—to those who, fired by the teachings of an infidel fanaticism, would ravage our fields, plunder our cities, destroy our temples of religion, and, in the language of Dickinson, "wipe out the South from the earth."*

We do not believe that the sentiment of churchmen, North or South, is in favor of such teachings. Ours is not a war of aggression: it is not a war against "constituted authorities." It was forced upon us, against our will and against our earnest remonstrances—against long forbearance and repeated demands for a peaceful settlement. It is a war in behalf of all that is sacred; and therein—not in our numbers, our valor, or our material resources, but in its own justice and nobleness—lies the true strength of our cause.

[The above article was sent to Bishop Potter, by the author of it, with a private letter, stating that the question propounded in it was asked in good faith, and respectfully begging that he would answer it. In the course of this letter it was incidentally mentioned that the sons of two clergymen, of the writer's immediate vicinity, were "in arms" for the defence of their country from invasion, with the full consent and approval of their parents, and pointing out the possibility that some of those arrayed in deadly strife against them might be incited and encouraged thereto by the very language of the prayer set forth by Bishop Potter.

* Mr. Dickinson, it is said, has since denied using this language. We are happy to make the correction. It does not affect the argument.

The letter concluded with the expression of an earnest desire that something might be elicited towards a removal of the grievous wrong existing on one side or the other, and a restoration of charity.

To this letter a postscript was subsequently appended by the two clergymen alluded to, expressive of concurrence in its sentiments, and uniting in the request that Bishop Potter would answer the question proposed to him in the article from the Mobile Tribune:

The following is Bishop Potter's reply:]

PHILADELPHIA, May 13, 1861.

My Dear Sir: You "beg me to explain how it is possible that (I) could, under the circumstances, give so much sanction and encouragement to those engaged in this *unholy, unprovoked, wanton attempt to destroy us and all that is dear to us.*"

Your misconception is so radical that I almost despair of correcting it. What you regard as an "attempt to destroy you and all that is dear to you," is considered by us as simply an attempt to defend ourselves and the Capitol of our country from threatened invasion, our Constitution from destruction, and even our Southern brethren from that which is the surest protection for themselves and their peculiar institutions. From the secession of South Carolina to the storming of Fort Sumter, the General Government remained all but passive. It then became indispensable that we should know whether it was a Government, whether it could retain its hold of Washington, and whether the whole system that Washington and his coopeers inaugurated in 1789 was not a delusion and imposture. This, my dear sir, is the whole story. Your theory not only disregards your own obligations under the Constitution, but it leaves to us no Government, except in name—opening the door for perpetual discord and for secession without end.

I do not believe that at the North one man in fifty desires an invasion of your soil, or the destruction of your social system. They simply desire that you should not break up the Union by your method of leaving it, but refer all subjects of complaint to a Convention of all the States, which will be competent either to redress all grievances, or to provide a way in which you can retire from the Union, without dissolving the whole fabric of our General Government.

Under the present exasperated state of the sections, it is impossible to say to what lengths this conflict may go. But I assure you that in the few lines above you have the whole *animus* of the loyal States, and of Union men everywhere. Only the smallest number of fanatics think or talk of slavery. The whole question is one of self-defence, and of *Government or no Government.*

Yours, sincerely,

ALONZO POTTER.

[Signed]

W. T. WALTHALL, Esq., and Rev. Messrs. MASSEY and NICHOLSON.

Remarks on the Above.

[FROM THE MOBILE DAILY TRIBUNE, OF MAY 22, 1861.]

The reader will observe that Bishop Potter entirely evades the question which he was requested to answer. Two clergymen and a layman—each personally, or by family representatives, implicated in the rebellion "against the constituted authorities of the land"—call upon him, a bishop of their own church, to answer a plain question as to their primary and paramount allegiance. They waive, for the occasion, all consideration of the Confederate Government, and present to him the direct issue, whether, as citizens of Alabama, they have the right to array themselves in rebellion against the "constituted authorities" of that State at the bidding of the United States Government? He had solemnly condemned them for refusing to recognize the authority of the latter. They point out to him that they could not do otherwise without repudiating the former, and ask whether this would be justifiable in a Christian citizen. The Bishop escapes from the difficulty by ignoring the question. He does not pretend to answer it, but responds in a vague antithesis, that this is a question of "government or no government."

It is indeed a question of government or no government. The idea of STATE GOVERNMENT appears to have become utterly extinct in the minds of Northern men. If they realize it at all, it would seem to be merely as a sort of subsidiary authority, dependent upon, and subordinate to, what they are continually vaunting as "*the Government*" at Washington. As sovereign—as the object of the citizen's primary allegiance—as the source and fountain of all the limited authority bestowed upon a federal government—they have lost sight of it. Point it out to them, and they appear not to understand you. A pall of thick darkness would seem to have hidden from their vision everything except "*the Government*" of Lincoln and Seward.

To people so utterly oblivious of the first principles of their own government, "the whole system that Washington and his compeers inaugurated in 1781" may well seem "a delusion and a snare." In all the history of the world we know no instance of so sudden and remarkable a degeneracy of public sentiment on any one great principle. Hamilton, Adams, Ames, Marshall—founders and leaders of the so-called Federal school of politics—would have shrunk with indignation from any such radical and destructive abrogation of the principle of State authority. We have heard it remarked by a gentleman educated in the old Federal school and thoroughly imbued with its principles, who was strenuously opposed to the secession movement in the beginning,—that the late extraordinary development of Northern sentiment, in its entire contempt for, and ignorance of, the rights of States, was enough to satisfy him, now, of the necessity that existed for secession.

"No government except in name"! Does Bishop Potter know that the power, even in his own country, which administers justice between man and man, which protects the rights of person and property, regulates the succession of estates, preserves the public peace—in fact, which performs all the tangible, sensible functions of government, so far as the individual citizen is concerned, except the transmission of mails and the collection of duties—that this is a power entirely independent of what he calls "the Government"—a power of prior origin and superior obligation? That "Government" which fills the orb of his vision was abolished here in the South, and, but for this wicked war which its partisans have forced upon us, nobody would have missed anything of it except its burdens. In what particular were we dependent upon it for the preservation of peace and order, the prevention of crime, or the administration of justice?

We have purposely restricted this discussion to one single point, avoiding all consideration of the causes that might have amply justified a separation, even if it had involved a revolutionary dissolution of "the government." Bishop Potter tells us that he has no hostility to our peculiar institutions. Nobody accused or suspected him, or those that immediately sympathize with him, of having any. They are now, however, acting with those who have this hostility. The "fanatics" have an excuse for attempting to destroy the independence of the South. *They* have a principle (such as it is) involved in it. Their "conservative" allies, like Bishop Potter, have no such excuse. They are laboring under the monstrous, paradoxical delusion of "sustaining government" by annihilating the authority of sovereign States, and preserving a union based upon *free consent* by crushing half of its members into unwilling submission to the other half. A "misconception so radical" we might well "despair of correcting," but for having some confidence yet left in the mighty power of Truth, when the madness of the hour shall have expended itself.

The language and temper of Bishop Potter's letter are unexceptionable. We shall make no comment, therefore, upon the gratuitous addition to the proper address upon the envelope: "W. T. Walthall, Esq., Mobile, Alabama, U. S." Perhaps it was intended as a piece of harmless pleasantry. The English sovereigns, we believe, were in the habit, until a very recent period, of officially writing themselves "King of Great Britain, *France, Spain,*" &c., &c.

LETTER OF REV. J. J. NICHOLSON, IN ANSWER TO BISHOP POTTER.

SPRING HILL INSTITUTE, *Mobile, May 21, 1861.*

Rt. Rev'd and Dear Sir: W. T. Walthall, Esq., to-day handed me your letter, in reply to his, Rev. Mr. Massey's, and my own, which we addressed to you while attending our Diocesan Convention at Montgomery.

I did not suppose that I should be called upon to address you again, but the terms of your letter render this necessary. You have opened grave questions; undertaken to adjudicate the ease between the North and South. Therefore, as a loyal citizen of the C. S. A., and *especially of the sovereign State of Alabama*, and a loyal churchman, I trust you will hear me. Believing that I owed allegiance to the State of Alabama, and to the government of the C. S. A., I sent one of my sons (and have two others ready to go) to the defence of his country, which is threatened with invasion. I did this upon as conscientious principles as ever man acted upon.

Consider, then, my amazement, when I read your prayer, directed against me, against my son, against my country, as those "in arms against the constituted authorities of the land." "In arms against the constituted authorities of the land!" when my son went forth at the call of his government, at the call of his State? Preposterous!

We are not "in arms against the constituted authorities of the land," but in arms against those who deny our rights as American citizens, and who, in violation of their *own Constitution*, as their (late) Chief Justice has recently said, would put to death the citizens of free and independent States, because they have merely asserted their right to withdraw from a Union which has denied them justice, equality, and fraternal love!

Now your prayer, Rt. Rev'd and dear Sir, does not merely call upon God, our Heavenly Father, to have mercy upon the land and save it from the horrors of civil war, (which would have been hailed with satisfaction and thanks throughout the church in the South,) but *it adjudicates the case against us at the Throne of Grace, and accounts of us all as REBELS!* And I, as a Presbyterian of the Church, before God, and the Church, protest against it as unethical and unjust! I protest that the South has never wronged the North, nor interfered with its rights or just privileges. I protest that we have "sought peace and ensued it." I protest that we have made every honorable overture for a peaceable separation. I protest that the government at Washington inaugurated this unholy war by refusing us a peaceable separation; that, by its efforts to reinforce Fort Sumter, it aimed to place its armed bands there to menace us into subjection, and to slay, if need be, (to effectuate their unholy purposes,) our wives, our mothers, our children. I protest that the *animus* of the North at the present time shows conclusively the position we *would* have been in at the end of four years under Mr. Lincoln's government. We should have been utterly powerless; the sword of the "irrepressible conflict" would have been at the throat of every man who

claimed, in our midst, his rights as a citizen. I protest that our land would have been filled with JOHN BROWNS, fully armed, and with murderous intent charged, to our destruction. So much for your *assumption* touching the present efforts of the North to save us from ruin. Alas! for *such charity*; it savors not of that charity of the early church so distinctly brought out in our Whitsunday lessons and services. Read those services again, especially the Second Lesson, and see how strangely your prayer, and the present position of the North (which you uphold) contrast with them. We are able to take care of ourselves, our Christianity and civilization. All that we ever asked of the North is to be let alone. We do not wish *it* to be held responsible for any of our wrongs in church or state. Why can it not leave us alone in our naughtiness—if naughty we are, and *you* certainly think us so)—to our quiet pursuits, and to the fulfilment of our duties as good citizens of the C. S. A.?

But, dear Bishop Potter, the poor traduced South, under any and all circumstances is, according to the decision of the North, destined to be “in evil case.” The dog in the manger would neither eat the straw, nor allow the poor hungry ox to have it. This homely figure is exactly applicable in the issue between the North and South. The poor South, in any case, was to be crushed. *In the Union*, she was to be crushed out by the “irrepressible conflict” of which your present President, and a leading member of his Cabinet, are the reputed authors. *In the Union, the happiest people on the earth were to be tampered with and incited to deeds, at the very thought of which we shudder. In the Union*, the very institution placed in her care and custody by the *North*, (after it became to the North unprofitable,) was to be her ruin and destruction! Pause before the picture, and ponder it well, before you (I beseech you, as an aggrieved Presbyterian,) again venture, on the grounds you have assumed, to justify the prayer which you have put forth against me, my State, my country, and my child! That prayer strengthens the hand and fires the heart of the leaders in this dread conflict; and should blood flow, *depend upon it, Bishop Potter, it will cry to God against all who are responsible for it!*

Now turn the picture another way: *Out of the Union*, also, the poor South is to be crushed, according to the Northern *animus*, because, as you say, the question in the North now, is, “government or no government.” Then for the South there is no peace, *IN THE UNION, OR OUT OF IT*. Can you call this justice? Is this the charity of the gospel which teaches us to do unto others as we would have them do unto us? I know you say that in the issues between the two sections at present, the peculiar institution of the South is ignored. But for one, I am not willing, that at this juncture, that question should be evaded; for it lies at the foundation of the whole matter, and for the North now, to dodge it, is but a begging of the question. You know the whole story; I need not go into it. And now, with this before us, after long years of abuse and malignity, when the South offers to retire peaceably from a family who had declared her socially unfitted for their company, by many acts and deeds; and to separate herself from a people who are thus *intent upon her destruction*, is it not a mockery of justice and humanity that she should be told that her people are rebels, and must be slain and subjugated?

Dear Bishop, can you expect heaven to smile upon such a cause? And is it not strange that a people who can be thus unjust to their own brethren, should presume to talk about the injustice of others on any subject?

Hence, *IN THE UNION, OR OUT OF IT*, the mind of the North is to crush the South. And when a Bishop of the Church sets forth a prayer sustaining this unholy policy, as a Presbyterian of the Church, I have a right to protest, and will protest, against it, before God, before the Church, and before the civilized world.

Moreover, I protest against the implication in your letter that the North is obliged to defend itself against an invasion from the South. All such talk, Rt. Rev. and dear sir, you ought to know is gratuitous. You know full well that all that is necessary to restore peace and quiet to the land, is for Mr. Lincoln to withdraw his war proclamation, his menacing ships and arms, and leave the South to its peaceful pursuits. The North is acting the part of the wolf in the fable: the wolf would have it that the lamb muddied his water; and though the lamb proved that *that could not be, since water never runs up a stream, yet the poor lamb's blood paid the penalty of the wolf's falsehood!* But, if the U. S. Government be a military despotism, and the South is to be WHIPPED into subjection to it, then may you and all mankind sing the requiem of the principles for which our (*I know my*) fathers fought and bled.

And now to come more directly to a leading issue in your letter: You say the question now with the North is "Government or no government." Well, what has this to do with my allegiance to Alabama, and, through her, to the Southern Confederacy? Do you not owe allegiance to Pennsylvania? What would you think of my calling you a rebel for obeying the mandates of your State? I surely have the same right to stigmatize you as a rebel for obeying the mandates of Pennsylvania, that you have to stigmatize me and my sons as such, for obeying Alabama. You yield a great and vital principle, which underlies all government, it strikes me, in the grounds which you assume. Now, Bishop, I have not the slightest doubt about the State of Alabama having a right to the allegiance of her citizens; nor have I the slightest doubt that, through the union of my State with the C. S. A., *THEY* have a right to the allegiance of all her citizens within their jurisdiction. Were I to take a contrary ground I should be a traitor; and were I to take up arms against the "constituted authorities" over me, then I should be a rebel. The State of Alabama, in her sovereign capacity, has said that she is no longer a member of the Confederacy known as the United States. Would you teach me and my children to rebel against her authority? I wish you to think of this: it is worthy your most deliberate consideration, and it strikes me you must either answer in the *affirmative*, or *retract your position*. If you answer *affirmatively*, then you *advise me and my children to rebel against the sovereign State of Alabama, which has a right to our allegiance, and to VIOLATE THE LAW AND DOCTRINE OF CHRIST*. You will settle which horn of the dilemma you will take shelter on. Bishop Potter, the argument is unanswerable: even your polished logic must quail before it. You *dare* not advise me and my sons to rebel against the State of Alabama! Then, your prayer is based on a wrong hypothesis, and one which, if carried out, would *allow every man in Pennsylvania to become a rebel against his State, and justify him in that rebellion!* For I defy you to prove that that would be rebellion against the sovereign State of Pennsylvania, on the part of any of her citizens, which would not also be rebellion against the sovereign State of Alabama, on the part of any one of *her* citizens. Take care, dear Bishop, lest in your haste to adjudicate against the South, you should implicitly ignore a vital principle to your own State, and sow seeds which may produce a harvest of evils. When Pennsylvania and other Northern States passed laws annulling the "Fugitive Slave" law of the Congress of the United States, did they not lay claim to the doctrine of State sovereignty? If not, upon what ground, pray, could they have passed laws directly in the face of the Congress of the United States, annulling its solemn act? This they did *in the Union*, and no force or coercion was applied to chastise them for their naughtiness. The South remained true to all the laws of the United States, as long as *she could* remain *in the Union*. Each State of the C. S. A., claiming the same doctrine

of State sovereignty that Pennsylvania claimed, declared herself no longer a party to that Union—dissolved the contract, and fell back upon her reserved rights as an independent State. This is the sin of the South! This is why I and my sons, who are bound by the law of Christ, by every principle of honor and duty, and patriotism, to be true and loyal to Alabama, are denounced as rebels, as those “in arms against the constituted authorities of the land.” I point my remarks frequently in the first person. I suppose you will understand that I have joined no army except that of Christ’s militant army. But, dear Bishop, I am keenly alive to what I believe to be the great wrong you have done us, and the great wrong of putting forth such a prayer. And I will tell you frankly, that if it comes to that, I am ready, trusting in the merits and mercies of my Redeemer, to join the *army of martyrs before* I yield one jot or tittle as touching the righteousness of the issue between us.

Now, Bishop Potter, with all this before you, permit me to ask you a question: Why, in directing your letter, did you take so much pains to address it as follows: “W. T. Walthall, Esq., Mobile, Alabama, U. S.”? Did you mean to be offensive personally, by thereby implying that, in your estimation, we, who were interested jointly in that letter, *were rebels*? You know that we did not account Alabama one of the *United States*, but of the *Confederate States of America*. You must have known, had you reflected at all, that to have accounted of ourselves in any other light, would have been to be traitors to our State and the government of the Confederate States of America. Pardon me, then, for saying, what I feel, that that gratuitous “fling” savors of a spirit which I must be excused from characterizing as my feelings dictate; for I would be respectful throughout, and trust that no word or thought has escaped me which would not bear the test of that dread account which we must all render at the last. I have spoken earnestly, but I trust with the gravity becoming the great issue between us. You are a bishop; as such I honor you: but your acts, like those of all men in high places, are open to criticism. And, feeling personally aggrieved by your prayer, I believed I had a right to a hearing. I have left many, many things unsaid, that burn for utterance on this question of “government or no government,” as you have put it. But I forbear, and will conclude by showing how all this civil war, which the North has inaugurated against the South, can be averted: *Let Mr. Lincoln withdraw his war proclamation, withdraw his insulting fleets and armies from our waters and our soil*, and let us alone, and peace will smile upon the land. Until that is done, dear Bishop Potter, in my humble judgment, there will be no peace; for, as sure as light is not darkness, nor truth falsehood, just so sure is the die cast—the South will never yield her ground, nor be forced into subjection to the North. Why then should the North pursue such mad policy as attempting such a thing? Neither Cæsar nor Napoleon, in his wildest flights, ever dreamed of such a stupendous scheme. Will the North never realize that we are a people? Can it be possible that even intelligent clergymen and bishops of the church can think, for a moment, of subjugating and holding this vast territory under the iron rule of conquered dependencies? Do you, Bishop Potter, not know that this cannot be done; and can you, as a Bishop of the Church, give countenance to a policy which threatens to slay your brethren in the church? Are we, Bishop, in the last times, when the son is to be against the father, and brother against brother?

Look at the question in all its bearings, and then I trust you will unite with me in the prayer that God would, of his mercy in Christ, put it into the hearts of the leaders of your government to cease this unholy, wicked, and utterly profitless strife. It is in their power to stop it in a moment; but so long as they

threaten coercion, devastation and the sword, so long will the South take the promptest means to ensure a speedy peace.

If I have said aught that is unbecoming in an honest controversy, I trust you will pardon me. I feel deeply, and, it may be, speak too earnestly. But may I not plead as David did, "Is there not a cause?"

Yours, in Christ,

JOS. J. NICHOLSON,

Rector St. Mary's Church, Mobile.

Rt. Rev. A. POTTER, Bishop of Pennsylvania.

P. S.—Please permit me to add that you did not answer the question which we propounded. The point which we really raised was to know the ground upon which you could account us *rebels* for *obeying the sovereign State of Alabama*, which has a right to our loyal obedience? what right you have to condemn us as rebels for acknowledging and obeying that Confederate Government which the sovereign State of Alabama says is over us? This is the point we have raised, and to this point alone did we wish to call your attention. When you talk of "government or no government," you evade the whole question. We are quite *sure* that *we* have a government. If you *doubt* that *you* have any government *without us*, either in the State of Pennsylvania or the United States, we cannot see how we are rebels on that account.

J. J. N.